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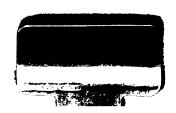
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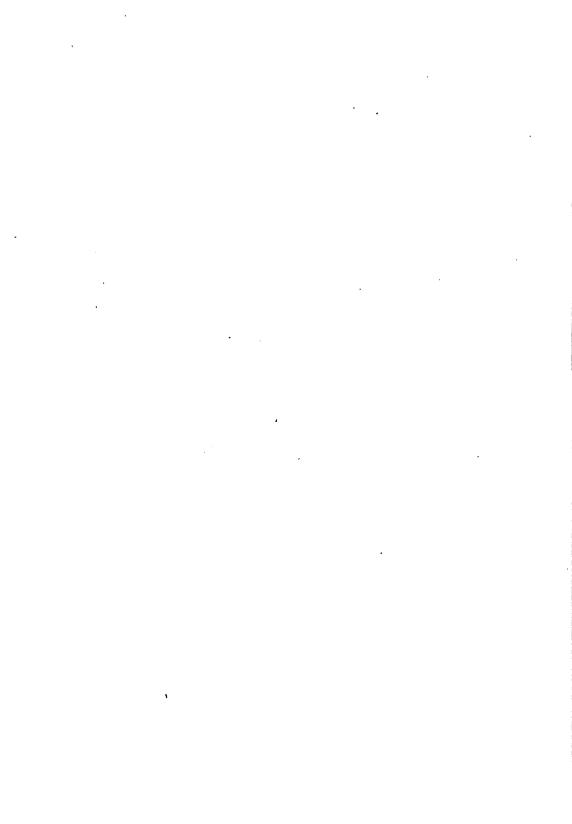
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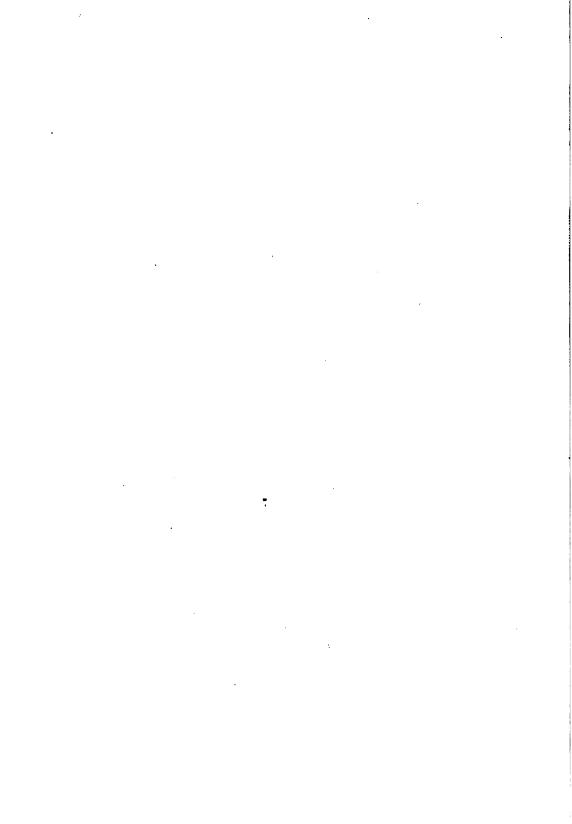








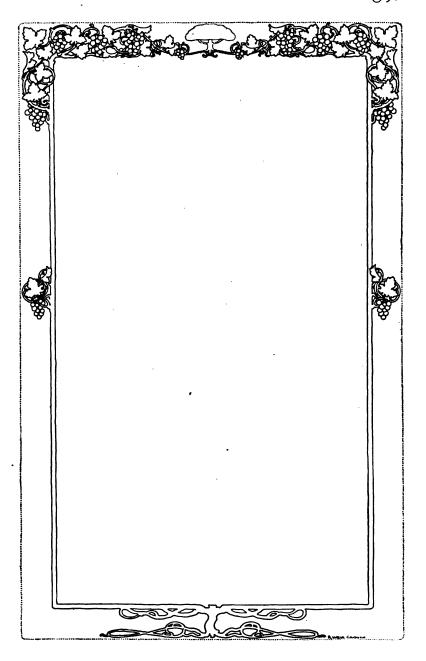


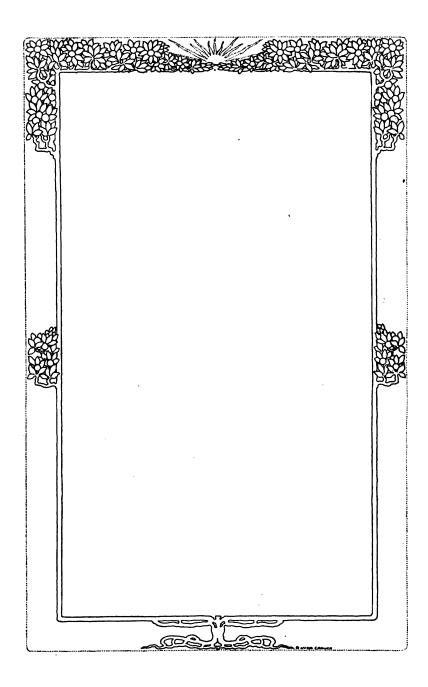


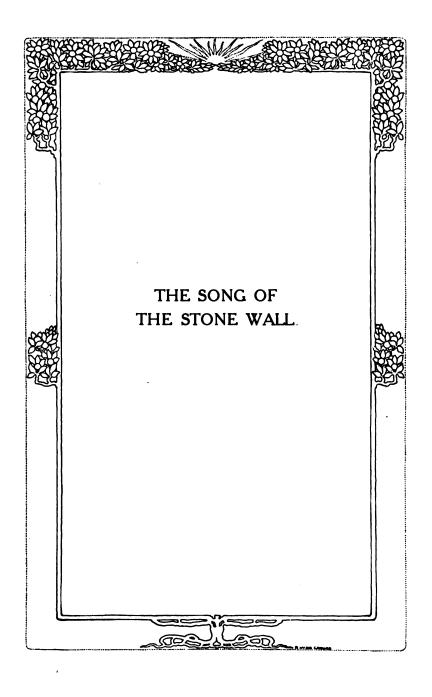


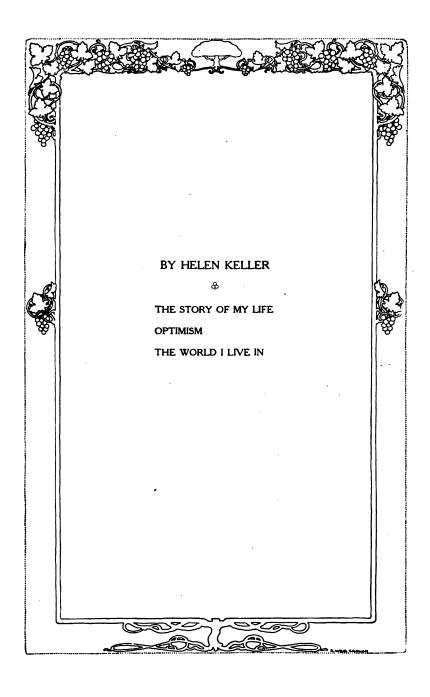
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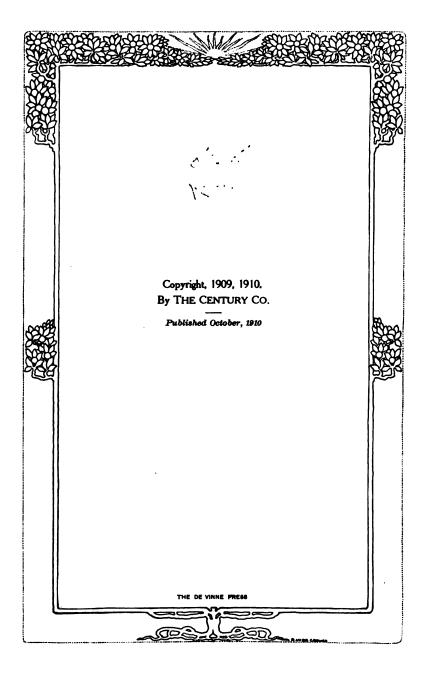




BY HELEN KELLER



NEW YORK THE CENTURY CO. 1910



DEDICATION

WHEN I began "The Song of the Stone Wall," Dr. Edward Everett Hale was still among us, and it was my intention to dedicate the poem to him if it should be deemed worthy of publication. I fancied that he would like it; for he loved the old walls and the traditions that cling about them.

As I tried to image the men who had built the walls long ago, it seemed to me that Dr. Hale was the living embodiment of whatever was heroic in the founders of New England. He was a great American. He was also a great Puritan. Was not the zeal of his ancestors upon his lips, and their courage in his heart? Had they not bequeathed to him their torchlike faith, their patient fervor of toil and their creed of equality?

But his bright spirit had inherited no trace of their harshness and gloom. The windows of his soul opened to the sunlight of a joyous faith. His optimism and genial humor inspired gladness and good sense in others. With an old



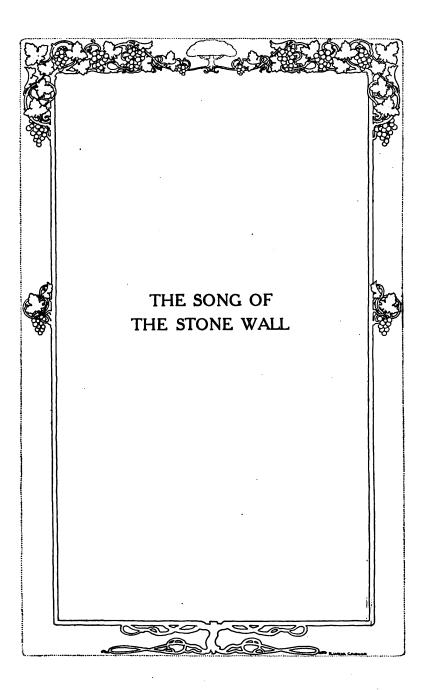
story he prepared their minds to receive new ideas, and with a parable he opened their hearts to generous feelings. All men loved him because he loved them. They knew that his heart was in their happiness, and that his humanity embraced their sorrows. In him the weak found a friend, the unprotected, a champion. Though a herald and proclaimer of peace, he could fight stubbornly and passionately on the side of jus-His was a lovable, uplifting greatness which drew all men near and ever nearer to God and to each other. Like his ancestors, he dreamed of a land of freedom founded on the love of God and the brotherhood of man. a land where each man shall achieve his share of happiness and learn the work of manhood to rule himself and "lend a hand."

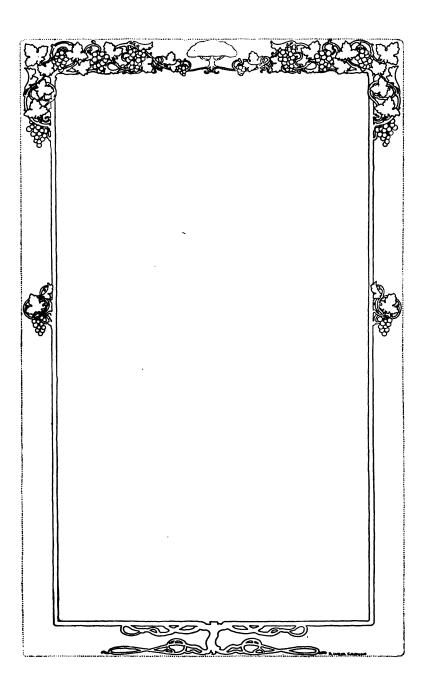
Thoughts like these were often in my mind as the poem grew and took form. It is fitting, therefore, that I should dedicate it to him, and in so doing I give expression to the love and reverence which I have felt for him ever since he called me his little cousin, more than twenty years ago.

HELEN KELLER

Wrentham, Massachusetts, January, 1910.









Come walk with me, and I will tell

What I have read in this scroll of stone;

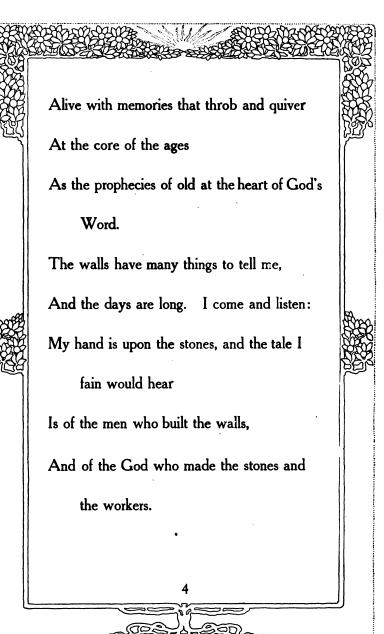
I will spell out this writing on hill and meadow.

It is a chronicle wrought by praying workmen,

The forefathers of our nation-

Leagues upon leagues of sealed history awaiting an interpreter.

This is New England's tapestry of stone



With searching feet I walk beside the wall;

I plunge and stumble over the fallen stones;

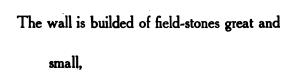
I follow the windings of the wall

Over the heaving hill, down by the meadowbrook,

Beyond the scented fields, by the marsh where rushes grow.

On I trudge through pine woods fragrant and cool

And emerge amid clustered pools and by rolling acres of rye.



Tumbled about by frost and storm,

Shaped and polished by ice and rain and sun;

Some flattened, grooved, and chiseled

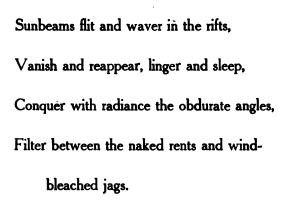
By the inscrutable sculpture of the weather;

Some with clefts and rough edges harsh to the

Gracious Time has glorified the wall.

And covered the historian stones with a mantle of green.

touch.

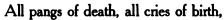


I understand the triumph and the truth

Wrought into these walls of rugged stone.

They are a miracle of patient hands,

They are a victory of suffering, a pæan of pain;



Are in the mute, moss-covered stones;

They are eloquent to my hands.

O beautiful, blind stones, inarticulate and dumb!

In the deep gloom of their hearts there is a gleam

Of the primeval sun which looked upon them

So in the heart of man shines forever

When they were begotten.

A beam from the everlasting sun of God.

Rude and unresponsive are the stones;

Yet in them divine things lie concealed;

I hear their imprisoned chant: -

"We are fragments of the universe,

Chips of the rock whereon God laid the.

foundation of the world:

Out of immemorial chaos He wrought us.

Out of the sun, out of the tempest, out of the travail of the earth we grew.

We are wonderfully mingled of life and death;

We serve as crypts for innumerable, unnoticed, tiny forms.

We are manifestations of the Might

That rears the granite hills unto the clouds

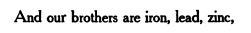
And sows the tropic seas with coral isles.

We are shot through and through with hidden color;

A thousand hues are blended in our gray substance.

Sapphire, turquoise, ruby, opal,

Emerald, diamond, amethyst, are our sisters from the beginning,



Copper and silver and gold.

We are the dust of continents past and to come,

We are a deathless frieze carved with man's destiny;

In us is the record sibylline of far events.

We are as old as the world, our birth was before the hills.

We are the cup that holds the sea

And the framework of the peak that parts the sky.

When Chaos shall again return,

And endless Night shall spread her wings upon a ruined world,

We alone shall stand up from the shattered earth,

Indestructible, invincible witnesses of God's

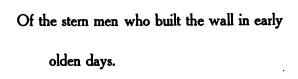
eternal purpose."

In reflective mood by the wall I wander;

The hoary stones have set my heart astir;

My thoughts take shape and move beside me
in the guise





One by one the melancholy phantoms go stepping from me,

And I follow them in and out among the stones.

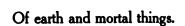
I think of the days long gone,

Flown like birds beyond the ramparts of the world.

The patient, sturdy men who piled the stones

Have vanished, like the days, beyond the

bounds



From their humble, steadfast lives has sprung the greatness of my nation.

I am bone of their bone, breath of their breath,

Their courage is in my soul.

The wall is an Iliad of granite: it chants to me

Of pilgrims of the perilous deep,

Of fearless journeyings and old forgotten things.

The blood of grim ancestors warms the fingers



That trace the letters of their story;

My pulses beat in unison with pulses that are stilled;

The fire of their zeal inspires me In my struggle with darkness and pain.

These embossed books, unobliterated by the tears and laughter of Time,

Are signed with the vital hands of undaunted men.

I love these monoliths, so crudely imprinted With their stalwart, cleanly, frugal lives.

From my seat among the stones I stretch my hand and touch

My friend the elm, urnlike, lithesome, tall.

Far above the reach of my exploring fingers

Birds are singing and winging joyously

Through leafy billows of green.

The elm-tree's song is wondrous sweet;

The words are the ancientest language of trees -

They tell how earth and air and light

Are wrought anew to beauty and to fruitfulness.

I feel the glad stirrings under her rough bark;

Her living sap mounts up to bring forth leaves;

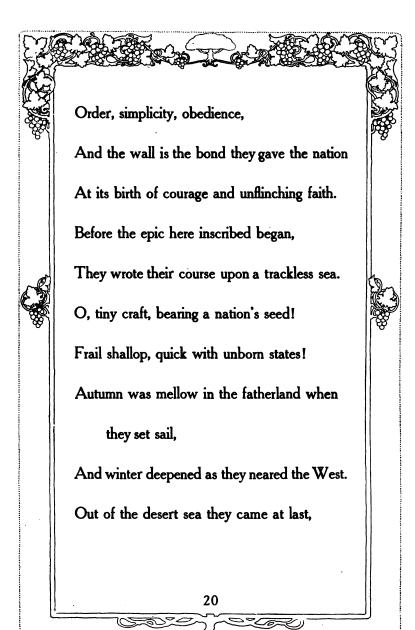
Her great limbs thrill beneath the wand of spring.

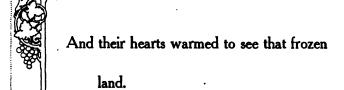
This wall was builded in our fathers' days—

Valorous days when life was lusty and the land was new.

Resemble the walls the builders, buffeted, stern, and worn.

To us they left the law,





O, first gray dawn that filtered through the dark!

Bleak, glorious birth-hour of our northern states!

They stood upon the shore like new created men;

On barren solitudes of sand they stood,

The conquered sea behind, the unconquered

21

wilderness before.

Some died that year beneath the cruel cold, And some for heartsick longing and the pang Of homes remembered and souls torn asunder. That spring the new-plowed field for bread of life Bordered the new-dug acre marked for death; Beside the springing corn they laid in the sweet, dark earth The young man, strong and free, the maiden, fair and trustful, The little child, and the uncomplaining mother.



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Across the meadow, by the ancient pines,

Where I, the child of life that lived that spring,

Drink in the fragrances of the young year,

The field-wall meets one grimly squared and

straight.

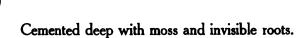
Beyond it rise the old tombs, gray and restful,

And the upright slates record the generations.

Stiffly aslant before the northern blasts,

Like the steadfast, angular beliefs

Of those whom they commemorate, the headstones stand,



The rude inscriptions charged with faith and love,

Graceless as Death himself, yet sweet as Death,

Are half erased by the impartial storms.

As children lisping words which move to laughter

Are themselves poems of unconscious melody,

So the old gravestones with their crabbed muse

Are beautiful for their halting words of faith,

Their groping love that had no gift of song.

But all the broken tragedy of life

And all the yearning mystery of death

Are celebrated in sweet epitaphs of vines and violets.

Close by the wall a peristyle of pines

Sings requiems to all the dead that sleep.

Beyond the village churchyard, still and calm,

Steeped in the sweetness of eternal morn,

The wall runs down in crumbling cadence

Beside the brook which plays

Through the land like a silver harp.

A wind of ancient romance blows across the field,

A sweet disturbance thrills the air;

The silken skirts of Spring go rustling by,

And the earth is astir with joy.

Up the hill, romping and shaking their golden heads,

Come the little children of the wood.

From ecstasy to ecstasy the year mounts upward.

Up from the south come the odor-laden winds,

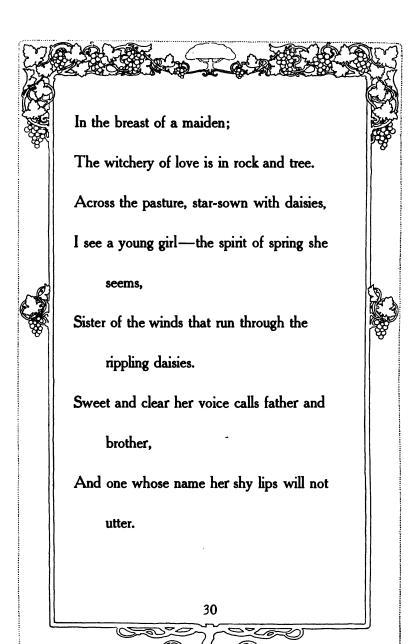
Angels and ministers of life,

Dropping seeds of fruitfulness

Into the bosoms of flowers.

Elusive, alluring secrets hide in wood and hedge

Like the first thoughts of love





In the unfolding of the tale

That Adam and Eve beneath the blossoming rose-tree

Told each other in the Garden of Eden.

Once more the wind blows from the walls,

And I behold a fair young mother;

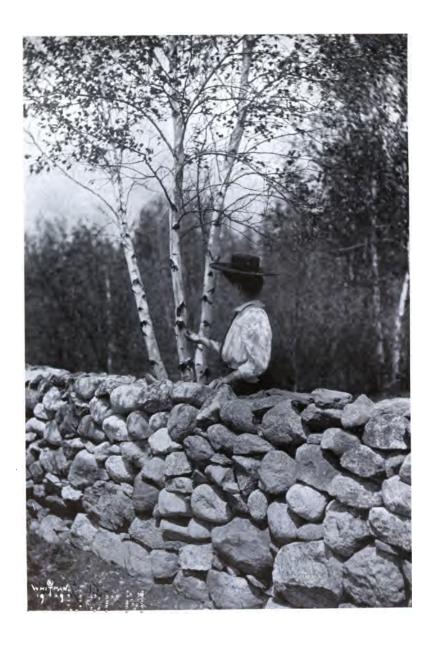
She stands at the lilac-shaded door

With her baby at her breast;

She looks across the twilit fields and smiles

And whispers to her child: "Thy father

comes!"



Life triumphed over many-weaponed Death.

Sorrow and toil and the wilderness thwarted their stout invasion;

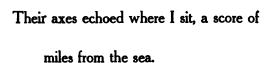
But with the ship that sailed again went no retreating soul!

Stubborn, unvanquished, clinging to the skirts of Hope,

They kept their narrow foothold on the land,

And the ship sailed home for more.

With yearlong striving they fought their way into the forest;



Slowly, slowly the wilderness yielded

To smiling grass-plots and clearings of yellow

com;

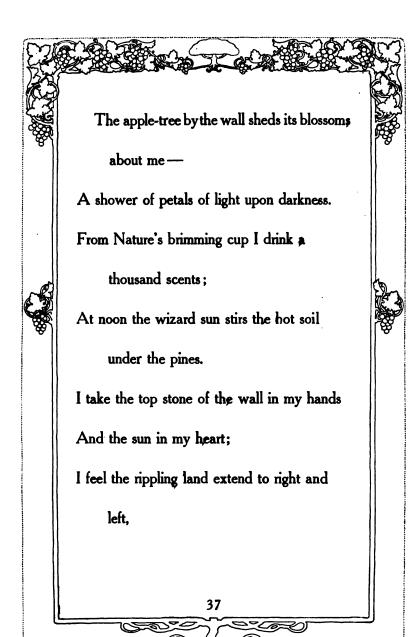
And while the logs of their cabins were still moist

With odorous sap, they set upon the hill

The shrine of liberty for man's mind,

And by it the shrine of liberty for man's soul,

The school-house and the church.



Bearing up a receptive surface to my uncertain feet;

I clamber up the hill and beyond the grassy sweep;

I encounter a chaos of tumbled rocks.

Piles of shadow they seem, huddling close to the land.

Here they are scattered like sheep,

Or like great birds at rest,

There a huge block juts from the giant wave of the hill.

At the foot of the aged pines the maiden's moccasins

Track the sod like the noiseless sandals of Spring.

Out of chinks in the wall delicate grasses wave,

As beauty grew out of the crannies of those

hard souls.

Joyously, gratefully, after their long wrestling

With the bitter cold and the harsh white

winter,

They heard the step of Spring on the edge of melting snow-drifts;

Gladly, with courage that flashed from their life-beaten souls,

As the fire-sparks fly from the hammered stone,

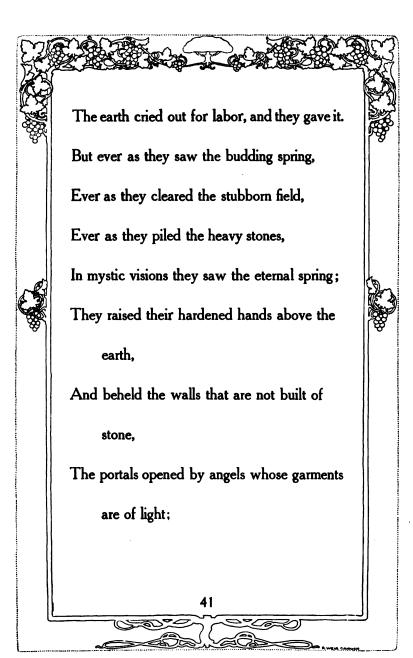
They hailed the fragrant arbutus;

Its sweetness trailed beside the path that they cut through the forest,

And they gave it the name of their ship

Mayflower.

Beauty was at their feet, and their eyes beheld it;



And beyond the radiant walls of living stones

They dreamed vast meadows and hills of
fadeless green.

In the old house across the road

With weather-beaten front, like the furrowed face of an old man,

The lights are out forever, the windows are broken,

And the oaken posts are warped;

The storms beat into the rooms as the passion of the world



Racked and buffeted those who once dwelt in them.

The psalm and the morning prayer are silent.

But the walls remain visible witnesses of faith

That knew no wavering or shadow of turning.

They have withstood sun and northern blast,

They have outlasted the unceasing strife

Of forces leagued to tear them down.

Under the stars and the clouds, under the summer sun,

Beaten by rain and wind, covered with tender vines,

The walls stand symbols of a granite race,

The measure and translation of olden times.

In the rough epic of their life, their toil, their creeds,

Their psalms, their prayers, what stirring tales

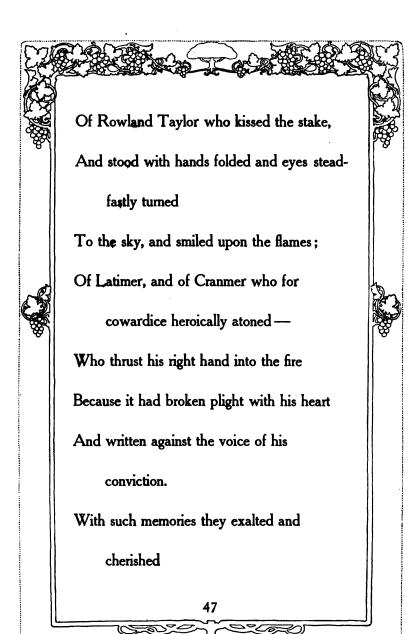
Of days that were their past had they to tell

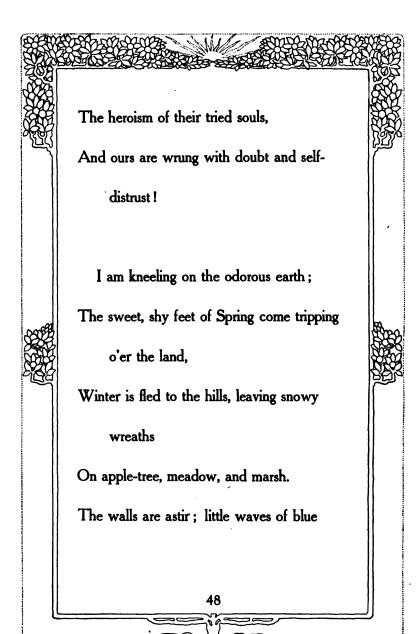
Their children to keep the new faith burning?

Tales of grandsires in the fatherland

Whose faith was seven times tried in fiery

furnaces,—





Run through my fingers murmuring:

"We follow the winds and the snow!"

Their heart is a cup of gold.

Soft whispers of showers and flowers

Are mingled in the spring song of the walls.

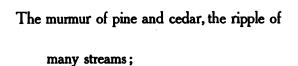
Hark to the songs that go singing like the wind

Through the chinks of the wall and thrill the

heart

And quicken it with passionate response.

The walls sing the song of wild bird, the hoof-beat of deer,



Crows are calling from the Druidical wood;

The morning mist still haunts the meadows

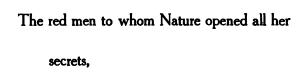
Like the ghosts of the wall builders.

As I listen, methinks I hear the bitter plaint

Of the passing of a haughty race,

The wronged, friendly, childlike, peaceable tribes,

The swarthy archers of the wilderness,



Who knew the haunts of bird and fish,

The hidden virtue of herb and root;

All the travail of man and beast they knew—

Birth and death, heat and cold,

Hunger and thirst, love and hate;

For these are the unchanging things writ in the imperishable book of life

That man suckled at the breast of woman must know.

In the dim sanctuary of the pines

The winds murmur their mysteries through

dusky aisles—

Secrets of earth's renewal and the endless cycle of life.

Living things are afoot among the grasses;

The closed fingers of the ferns unfold,

New bees explore new flowers, and the brook

Pours virgin waters from the rushing founts of

May.

In the old walls there are sinister voices—



The groans of women charged with witchcraft.

I see a lone, gray, haggard woman standing
at bay,

Helpless against her grim, sin-darkened judges.

Terror blanches her lips and makes her

confess

Bonds with demons that her heart knows not.

Satan sits by the judgment-seat and laughs.

The gray walls, broken, weatherworn oracles,

Sing that she was once a girl of love and

laughter,

Then a fair mother with Iullabies on her lips,

Caresses in her eyes, who spent her days

In weaving warmth to keep her brood against
the winter cold.

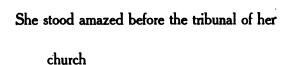
And in her tongue was the law of kindness;

For her God was the Lord Jehovah.

Enemies uprose and swore her accursed,

Laid at her door the writhing forms of little children,

And she could but answer: "The Evil One
Torments them in my shape."



And heard the gates of God's house closed against her.

Oh, shuddering the silence of the throng,

And fearful the words spoken from the

judgment-seat!

She raised her white head and clasped her wrinkled hands:

Nor, since Thou art a just and terrible God,

"Pity me, Lord, pity my anguish!

Forget to visit thy wrath upon these people;

For they have sworn away the life of Thy

Who hath lived long in the land keeping Thy commandments.

I am old, Lord, and betrayed;

By neighbor and kin am I betrayed;

A Judas kiss hath marked me for a witch.

Possessed of a devil? Here be a legion of devils!

Smite them, O God, yea, utterly destroy them that persecute the innocent."

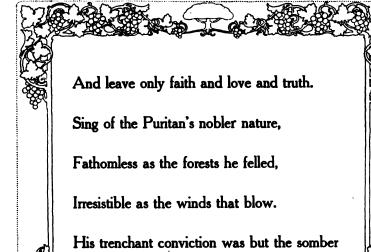
Before this mother in Israel the judges cowered;

But still they suffered her to die.

Through the tragic, guilty walls I hear the sighs

Of desolate women and penitent, remorseful men.

Sing of happier themes, O many-voiced epic,
Sing how the ages, like thrifty husbandmen,
winnow the creeds of men,



bulwark

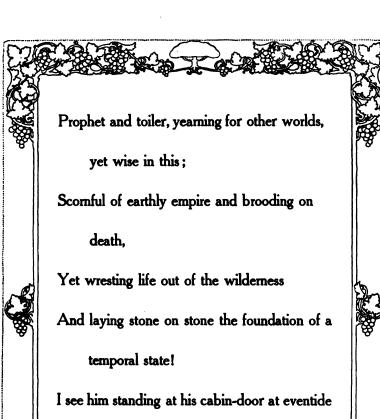
Which guarded his pure ideal.

Resolute by the communion board he stood,

And after solemn prayer solemnly cancelled

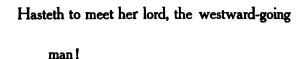
And abolished the divine right of kings

And declared the holy rights of man.



With dreaming, fearless eyes gazing at sunset hills;

In his prophetic sight Liberty, like a bride,



Even as he saw the citadel of Heaven,

He beheld an earthly state divinely fair and just.

Mystic and statesman, maker of homes,

Strengthened by the primal law of toil,

And schooled by monarch-made injustices,

He carried the covenant of liberty with fire and sword,

And laid a rich state on frugality!

Many republics have sprung into being,



Full-grown, equipped with theories forged in reason;

All, all have fallen in a single night;

But to the wise, fire-hardened Puritan

Democracy was not a blaze of glory

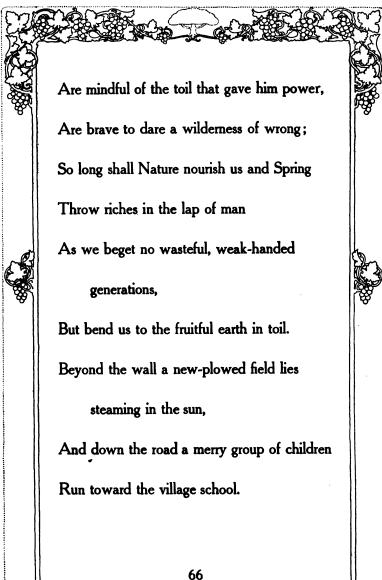
To crackle for an hour and be quenched out

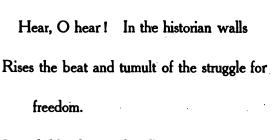
By the first gust that blows across the world.

I see him standing at his cabin-door,

And all his dreams are true as when he dreamed them;

But only shall they be fulfilled if we





Sacred, blood-stained walls, your peaceful front

Sheltered the fateful fires of Lexington;

Builded to fence green fields and keep the herds at pasture,

Ye became the frowning breastworks of stern battle;

Lowly boundaries of the freeman's farm,

Ye grew the rampart of a land at war;

And still ye cross the centuries

Between the age of monarchs and the age

When farmers in their fields are kings.

From the Revolution the young Republic emerged,

She mounted up as on the wings of the eagle,

She ran and was not weary, and all the

children of the world

Joined her and followed her shining path.

But ever as she ran, above her lifted head

Darkened the monster cloud of slavery.

Hark! In the walls, amid voices of prayer and of triumph,

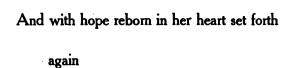
I hear the clank of manacles and the ominous mutterings of bondmen!

At Gettysburg, our Golgotha, the sons of the fathers

Poured their blood to wash out a nation's shame.

Cleansed by tribulation and atonement,

The broken nation rose from her knees,



Upon the open road to ideal democracy.

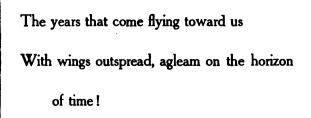
Sing, walls, in lightning words that shall cause the world to vibrate,

Of the democracy to come,

Of the swift, teeming, confident thing!

We are part of it—the wonder and the terror and the glory!

Fearless we rush forward to meet the years,



O eloquent, sane walls, instinct with a new faith,

Ye are barbarous, incongruous, but great with the greatness of reality.

Walls wrought in unfaltering effort,

Sing of our prosperity, the joyous harvest

Of the labor of lusty toilers.

Down through the years comes the ring of their victorious axes:

"Ye are titans of the forest, but we are stronger;

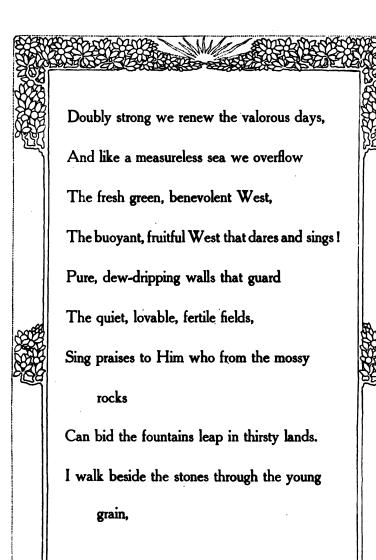
Ye are strong with the strength of mighty winds,

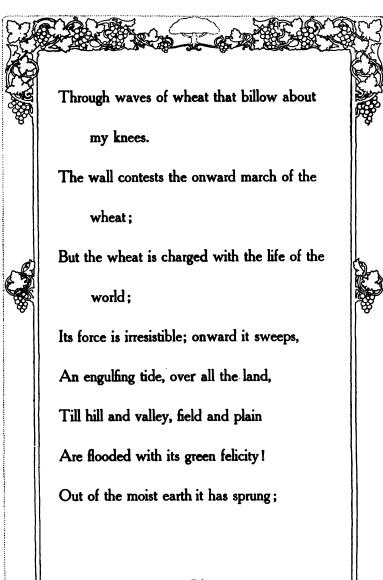
But we are strong with the unconquerable strength of souls!"

Still the young race, unassailable, inviolate,

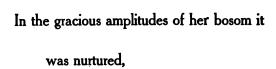
Shakes the solitudes with the strokes of

creation;









And in it is wrought the miracle of life.

Sing, prophetic, mystic walls, of the dreams of the builders;

Sing in thundering tones that shall thrill us

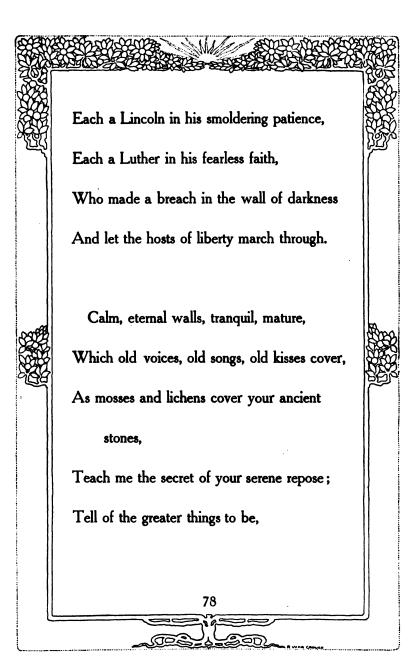
To try our dull discontent, our barren wisdom

Against their propagating, unquenchable,

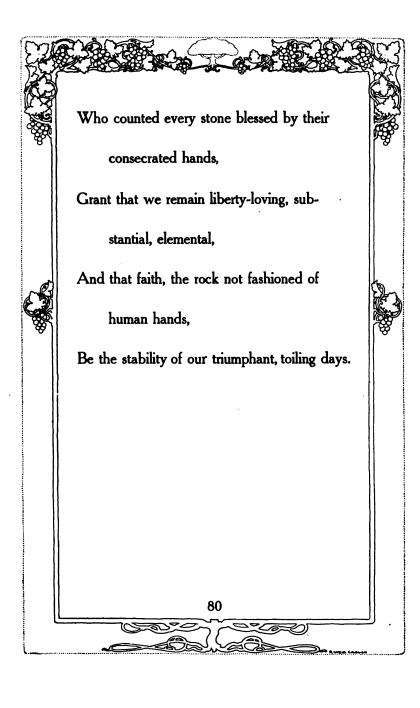
Sing in renerving refrain of the resolute men,

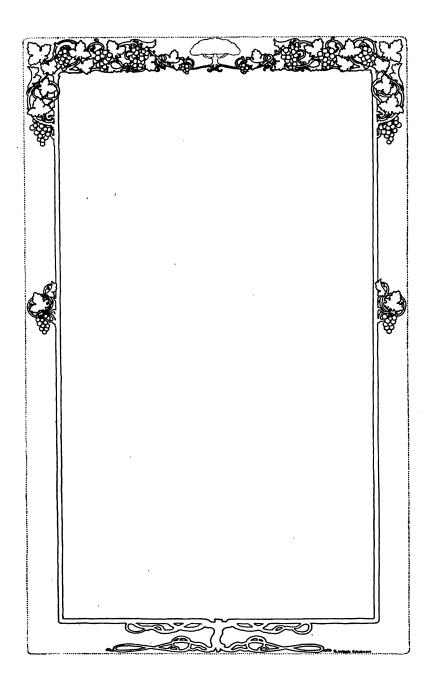
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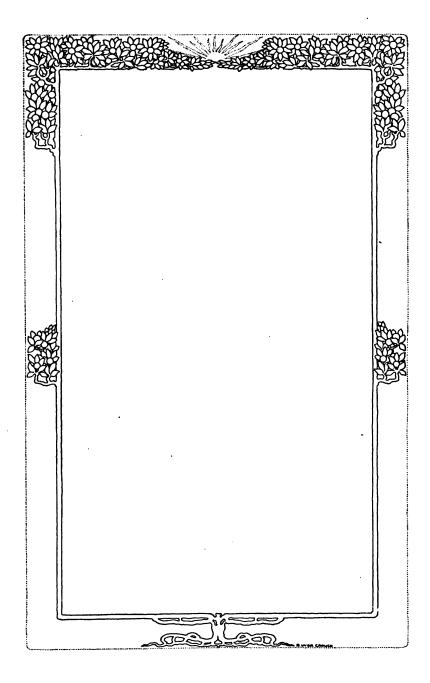
questionless visions.











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